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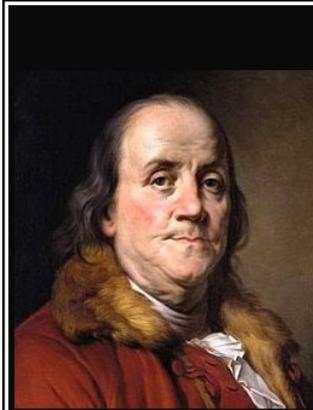
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Tom Tom English (Kinshicho)
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TOM TOM ENGLISH



Early to bed and early to rise makes a man
healthy, wealthy, and wise.

(Benjamin Franklin)

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VOCABULARY

Harried =

Feeling strain due to
persistent demands

Mandarin =

A high government
official or bureaucrat
(literally a member of
the 9 ranks of public
officials in the ancient
Chinese empire)

Take on =

To undertake, or to
begin to handle

Tally =

Score, count, or
amount

Discussion questions

1. What time do you wake up in the morning? Is it different in summer/winter? Why?
2. What do you think about the government's suggestion of starting work earlier in summer? Is it a good idea?
3. Do you agree that Japanese employees under-report overtime? How much overtime do you/did you work?
4. What do you think "presenteeism" means? Do you think Japanese companies have a culture of presenteeism?
5. Do you feel that drinking with colleagues is "practically compulsory"? If so, is this a good thing? Is it work?
6. What do you think about Daylight Savings Time? Is it a good idea for Japan? Why? Why not?

VOCABULARY

-ism =

Suffix to make a sound
into a doctrine, state, or
condition. Examples:
capitalism, Darwinism,
absenteeism, socialism

Archipelago =

A large group of islands
e.g. Japan, the
Philippines

Tick up =

To increase, to cause to
increase

Mull =

To think about
something deeply

Japan's famously long working hours will get a shakeup this summer, the government announced on Friday. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is proposing early starts and European-style flexibility.

Tokyo **mandarins** want the working day to start—and end—earlier in July and August. They hope this will bring a better balance of work and play for Japan's **harried** employees. They also hope to encourage them to spend time and money on private life and leisure.

“Prime Minister Abe said we would **take on** changing the summertime lifestyle so that (people) will start working early in the morning and spend time with families and others in the evening,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters.

To begin with, central government officials will promote early starts and flexible finishes, Suga said. Abe has recommended employees start work between 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., and finish work at around 5 p.m.

“It is often said that long work hours in our country stop people from appreciating Japan's benefits,” Suga said. “We believe that improving work styles is extremely important. This will let people feel the benefits of ‘Abenomics’ and make our country's growth sustainable,” he said.

According to statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the average Japanese did 1,735 hours' work in 2013. This is far more than the 1,489 of France and

Germany's **tally** of 1,388. It is less than the 1,788 hours of the United States. However, labor experts think Japan's true number is higher. Many employees under-report overtime because Japan has a culture of presentee**ism**.

Employees are sometimes expected to spend time with their colleagues in the evening, and drinking sessions are practically compulsory.

The prime minister has told his ministers to talk to private companies about the change, Suga said. He added that summer had been chosen because of its longer daylight hours.

But, he said, the introduction of daylight saving was not currently being considered because of the huge latitude differences of the Japanese **archipelago**.

“Considering that, I think we need careful consideration at the moment towards **ticking up** our country's standard time in a uniform way,” he said.

In summer months, the sun rises in Tokyo at around 4:30 a.m. and sets by 7 p.m. Japan has previously **mulled** an annual time change like that in Europe or North America. There, the clocks go forward in spring and back in the autumn. Japan has not tried this since the end of the Occupation.

Opponents give reasons such as: the simple nuisance of changing time; the risk of inviting even longer work hours; the possibility of increasing home air-conditioning demand in the evening.